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Surgeons Who Performed Autoappendectomy

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ORIGINAL

Abstract

Acute appendicitis is the most frequent cause of surgical acute abdomen. Mortality has decreased because of a better understanding of its pathophysiological mechanism and surgical treatment advances. There are documented many cases of autoappendectomy, most performed by surgeons.

Keywords

appendectomy, appendicitis, surgeon

Mister Editor

Text: Several cases of autoappendectomy have been reported. American surgeon Bertram F. Alden performed the first in 1912 under spinal anesthesia (1).

In 1921, Evan O'Neill Kane (1861–1932) carried out his own appendectomy using morphine and local anesthesia (2). Kane belonged to a family of physicians, including his mother Elizabeth, who gave her name to the hospital where he worked. In 1887, together with his mother and brother William, he founded Woodside Cottage Hospital in Kane. He specialized in occupational health and trauma surgery for railway workers. Kane introduced asbestos dressings, mica windows for brain surgery, and multi-site hypodermoclysis. He improved Murphy's button for intestinal anastomosis by enlarging its opening. He also used phonograph music in the operating room and acetylene lamps mounted on surgeons' heads for nighttime field operations. Kane had a remarkable history of self-surgery: in 1919 he amputated his own infected finger. On February 15, 1921, at age 59, he performed an autoappendectomy out of curiosity, lasting 30 minutes. Two weeks later, he returned to work. His aim was to experience the procedure from the patient's perspective and to test the effectiveness of local anesthesia, which he considered safer than ether. In 1932, at age 70, he operated on his own inguinal hernia in a procedure lasting nearly two hours, witnessed by the press and a photographer. He became drowsy during the operation, and Howard Cleveland completed the suturing. Kane resumed operating on patients just 36 hours later. He was known for leaving a small Morse code "K" signature near some surgical incisions and even proposed tattooing mothers and newborns with identical marks to avoid confusion. He died of pneumonia in 1932. Kane Hospital stopped working in 1970 (3).

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Robert Kerr “Jock” McLaren (1902-1956) was an Australian soldier who performed an autoappendectomy without anaesthesia using just a mirror and a knife in the middle of the jungle. He sutured his wound with natural fibres (4).

The most famous case is that of Leonid Ivanovich Rogozov (1934–2000) (5), a Soviet surgeon. In 1960, he interrupted his surgical training to join the Sixth Soviet Antarctic Expedition at Novo Lazarevskaya Station. On April 29, 1961, he developed symptoms of acute appendicitis. With the nearest base over 3,000 km away, Rogozov had no choice but to operate on himself. Using 0.5% novocaine as local anesthesia, he performed a 12 cm incision in the lower right quadrant of his abdomen. His assistants were a meteorologist, Alexander Artemyev, who handed him instruments, and a mechanical engineer, Zinovy Teplinsky, who managed the mirror and lamp. Rogozov found a perforated appendix, injected antibiotics into the abdominal cavity, and completed the operation in 1 hour and 45 minutes. He recovered successfully and was later awarded the Order of the Red Banner of Labor. Rogozov went on to earn his doctorate in surgery in 1966 and served as Head of the Department of Surgery at the Institute of Tuberculosis Pulmonology Research from 1986 until his death from lung cancer in 2000 (6).



(a) Evan Kane



(b) Robert McLaren



(c) Leonid Rogozov

Figure 1

Conflict Of Interest

Author declare no conflict of interest and no funding for this study.

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